



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NMFS Requests Comments on the Issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits, Scientific Research Permits, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits for the Collection of Atlantic HMS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces its intent to issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgement (LOAs), and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) in 2008. These EFPs and related permits would authorize collection and/or tagging of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks from Federal waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea for scientific data collection, public display, or chartering.

The HMS Management Division issued 44 permits in 2006 and has issued 38 permits in 2007 to date. These permits are issued to vessels and authorized samplers participating in at-sea observer programs, NMFS and non-NMFS scientists collecting data on HMS, educational institutions, public aquaria, and collectors acquiring HMS for display, among others.

Exempted fishing applications would continue to be considered for bycatch reduction research in closed regions of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea to test gear modifications and fishing techniques aimed at avoiding incidental capture of non-target species in 2008. The HMS Management Division will seek additional public comment, as necessary, on any such applications that may be deemed potentially controversial unless that research is being conducted solely from *bona fide* research vessels.

Written comments on these proposed collection, research, and fishing activities will be considered by NMFS when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits if received on or before 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on December 10, 2007. Please send comments to Michael Clark, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The permit applications and copies of the regulations pertaining to EFPs, SRPs, LOAs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits may also be requested from this address. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (301) 713-1917 or by e-mail to HMSEFP.2008@noaa.gov.

This notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Jackie Wilson at (240) 338-3936 or Michael Clark at (301) 713-2347.

Emily Menashes

for Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

11/13/2007
Date

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